

# Officials discuss pay, other issues

**A**ir Force Personnel officials answer some of the questions they receive about pay, benefits, promotions, assignments and other quality of life issues.

## *Housing allowances*

**Question:** Why doesn't the housing allowance cover all housing costs?

**Answer:** Congress intended that housing allowances cover 85 percent of housing costs. For example, 65 percent should be covered by the Basic Allowance for Quarters, 20 percent should be covered by the Variable Housing Allowance and 15 percent is to be paid by the member.

So, if rent equals \$1,000, the member would pay \$150. Unfortunately, BAQ has not kept pace with the Congressional standard of 65 percent and members are now absorbing approximately 19 percent of their housing costs rather than 15 percent.

Congress has increased BAQ above normal rates the last two years to help reduce members' out-of-pocket expenses. For 1997, Congress approved a 4.6 percent increase, 2.3 percent more than would have been required by law. This gave a staff sergeant with a family an additional \$123 per year; a

captain with a family received an additional \$169 dollars per year.

In addition to the increase in BAQ, Congress also approved other changes to address housing concerns: For example, in FY97, a housing allowance locality floor was established to help junior enlisted members who live in high-cost areas. For example, a senior airman at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., receives an extra \$104 per month.

More information concerning housing allowances and other quality of life issues can be found on the personnel home page: <http://www.dp.hq.af.mil/DP/>. To answer questions regarding pay, call the financial services office at Ext. 5518.

## *Pay raises*

**Question:** How do pay raises compare to the private sector?

**Answer:** Normally, pay raises are about the same. The law states military pay raises will equal the annual increase in the private sector wage growth, minus 0.5 percent. For example, if private wages go up 3 percent, pay raises will equal 2.5 percent

Congress, however, has passed a pay raise above or equal to the private sector

wage growth three out of the past six years. In 1997, the Air Force should have received a 2.3 percent increase. Congress raised that to 3 percent, so a staff sergeant with a family who would have received an annual raise of \$420, instead received \$548; a captain who would have received an annual raise of \$846, instead received \$1,140

For more information about pay, call Ext. 2417.

## *Child care providers*

**Question:** I understand there is a shortage of child-care providers. What is the Air Force doing to correct this situation?

**Answer:** The Air Force added 325 providers to child-care centers, including four at RAF Lakenheath. This action should relieve some of the infant and toddler care shortfall. The Air Force is struggling, however, to meet the total demand, and is expanding school-age child-care capacity by increasing use of the community and youth center facilities as well as striving to optimize the use of qualified family day-care providers

For more information concerning child care, call the child development center at Ext. 3829.